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# Cat Flea

The cat flea, Ctenocephalides felis, is one of the most abundant and widespread species of flea on Earth.

## Overview[]

The cat flea's primary host is the domestic cat, but this is also the primary flea infesting dogs in most of the world. The cat flea can also maintain its life cycle on other carnivores and on the Virginia opossum. Humans can be bitten but cannot be infested, so a population of cat fleas cannot be sustained by this aberrant host.

Fleas are tiny, dark brown insect that hop or scurry through a cat's fur but their droppings (black grit) often indicate infestation. Some cats become allergic to flea saliva and the associated self-trauma can be intense. Some cats develop an allergic dermatitis to fleabites.

## Control[]

Cats catch fleas directly from infected animals. However, as larvae hatch from eggs deposited in the home, environmental contamination is also an important issue. Use a preparation that controls this in addition to keeping your pet flea-free.

## Signs your pet might have fleas[]

There are a few things you can look out for that could mean your pet has fleas:

* Is your pet scratching?Areas of hair loss, bald or sore patches?Spots or scans?Redness and irritation?Thickened skin in areas (e.g. around ear edges)?Can you see tiny dark specks in its fur, or small browny-black insects scurrying about?Do you have any unaccounted for insect bites yourself?

If you've answered 'yes' to any of these questions, it could mean fleas.

## Comb your pet to check for fleas[]

A good way to check if your pet has fleas is to groom them using a fine-toothed comb held over something white, like a piece of kitchen paper. Any fleas or flea droppings will be deposited on the surface. Add a few drops of water, and if the droppings turn reddish brown it's very likely your pet has fleas.

If you're still unsure if your pet has fleas or want to know what product to use, speak to your vet for the best advice.

## Grooming helps spot fleas and ticks[]

Grooming your pet regularly has many benefits and will improve the bond between you. Even if, for example, you have a dog with short hair, you should still groom your dog regularly. Making this a regular routine will keep their fur cleaner and will show if your pet has any fleas or ticks.

Grooming your cat will also prevent matting and improve their circulation.

## Flea treatment[]

It's essential to treat both your pet and your home, as fleas can survive in the environment without a host for many months. Flea treatment can easily be done at home, so here's how to do it:

* Flea treatments: prevent and get rid of fleas by regularly using flea treatment for your pets. See your vet for advice on the best flea products that will work for your pet.Treat quickly: If you spot fleas on your pet, treat them quickly, as they can give your cat or dog tapeworms and diseases (make sure you worm your pet as well).Clean bedding regularly and vacuum furniture, floors and skirting boards to help destroy fleas at each stage of their lifecycle.Throw away the dust bag from your vacuum after each use to prevent any flea eggs and larvae from developing.Treat regularly: you may need to treat your pet and home for fleas all year round if your home is centrally heated.

Only give your pet flea treatment that's been recommended for them, ideally one prescribed by your vet. Products suitable for one species may not be suitable for another. Some dog flea treatments contain permethrin, an insecticide that is safe for dogs but highly toxic to cats.

## Flea bites and what they do[]

Flea bites can make your pet uncomfortable and itchy, but they can also bring a host of other problems:

* Allergic reactions: pets can be hypersensitive to flea saliva and suffer an allergic reaction.Blood loss: fleas feed on blood, so young or frail animals can become weak and even die as a result of blood loss.Tapeworm: flea larvae can become infected with tapeworm eggs. If your pet eats an infected flea it can become host to this parasite. If your pet has fleas you should also make sure your pet is treated for worms.Disease: fleas can also pass diseases to your pets. For example, myxomatosis is a serious disease in rabbits that can be spread by fleas.

## Navigation[]